

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
5 apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
10 read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

wherein the operations in the link copy mode are inhibited
15 when the link copy mode and a function non-executable in said local image formation apparatus or said other image formation apparatus is selected.

2. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 1,
20 wherein the functions include a staple function.

3. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 1, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

4. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

5 a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints an image; and
a communication unit which notifies said other image formation apparatus of function available in the local image formation apparatus,

10 wherein an image of a document read by and transferred from said other image formation apparatus is printed in said local image formation apparatus.

5. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 4,
15 wherein the functions include a staple function.

6. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 4,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

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S.A. 7. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a
25 document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least

one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports the functions available in said slave machine to said master machine, and said master machine inhibits the operation in the link copy mode when the link copy mode and a non-executable function in said master machine or said slave machine is selected.

8. The image formation system according to the claim 7, wherein the functions include a staple function.

9. The image formation system according to the claim 7, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

10. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

a display unit which displays keys used for selecting a function; and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the

read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

5 wherein if the link copy mode in said local image formation apparatus or said other image formation apparatus is selected, then a key for selecting the non-executable function is not displayed on said display unit.

10 11. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 10, wherein the functions include a staple function.

12. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 10, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
15 other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

13. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation
20 apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

25 wherein said slave machine reports the functions

available in said slave machine to said master machine, and said master machine does not display a key used for selecting a non-executable function when the link copy mode in said master machine or said slave machine is selected.

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14. The image formation system according to the claim 13, wherein the functions include a staple function.

15. The image formation system according to the claim 13, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

16. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;
a display unit which displays key used for selecting a function; and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

wherein if the link copy mode in said local image formation apparatus or said other image formation apparatus is selected, then a display indicating that the key for selecting the non-executable function is invalid is provided on said display unit.

17. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 16, wherein the functions include a staple function.

18. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 16, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

19. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports the functions available in said slave machine to said master machine, and if the link copy mode in said master machine or said slave machine is selected, then said master machine provides a display

indicating that the key for selecting the non-executable function is invalid.

20. The image formation system according to the claim 19,
5 wherein the functions include a staple function.

21. The image formation system according to the claim 19,
wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
peer to peer.

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22. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one
other image formation apparatus such that data communications
can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

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a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

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a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
read image is transferred to said other image formation
apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
local image formation apparatus and said other image formation
apparatus,

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wherein a mode for executing a non-executable in said
local image formation apparatus or said other image formation
apparatus is cancelled when the link copy mode in said local

image formation apparatus or said other image formation apparatus is selected.

23. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 22,
5 wherein the functions include a staple function.

24. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 22,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

10 25. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each
other for enabling data communications, an image formation
apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a
15 document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave
machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master
machine and said slave machine,

20 wherein said slave machine reports the functions
available in said slave machine to said master machine, and said
master machine cancels a mode for executing a non-executable
in said master machine or said slave machine when the link copy
mode in said master machine or said slave machine is selected.

26. The image formation system according to the claim 25,
wherein the functions include a staple function.

27. The image formation system according to the claim 25,
5 wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
peer to peer.

28. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one
other image formation apparatus such that data communications
10 can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

15 a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
read image is transferred to said other image formation
apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
local image formation apparatus and said other image formation
apparatus,

20 wherein the operations in the link copy mode are inhibited
when the link copy mode and the power of said other image
formation apparatus is OFF.

29. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 28, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

5 30. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

10 a printing unit which prints an image; and

a reporting unit which reports an ON/OFF state of the local image formation apparatus to said other image formation apparatus,

15 wherein an image of a document read by and transferred from said other image formation apparatus is printed in said local image formation apparatus.

20 31. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 30, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

32. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a

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document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

5 wherein said slave machine notifies an ON/OFF state of said slave machine to said master machine, and the said master machine inhibits the operation in the link copy mode when the link copy mode is selected and the power of said slave machine is OFF.

10 33. The image formation system according to the claim 32, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

15 34. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

20 a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and
25 said other image formation apparatus,

wherein if the link copy mode is selected and said other image formation apparatus is not in the state where data communications can be executed, then the link copy operation is inhibited.

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35. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 34, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

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36. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

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a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints an image; and

a reporting unit which reports to said other image formation apparatus whether data communications can be executed from the local image formation apparatus to said other image formation apparatus,

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wherein an image of a document read by and transferred from said other image formation apparatus is printed in said local image formation apparatus.

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37. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 36, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

5 38. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
10 one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine whether data communications can be executed from said slave
15 machine to said slave machine, and said master machine inhibits the operation in the link copy mode when the link copy mode is selected and said slave machine is not in data communications executable state.

20 39. The image formation system according to the claim 38, wherein said slave machine periodically transmits a communication connection confirmation signal indicating whether connection has been established to said master machine, and said master machine receives the communication connection
25 confirmation signal and determines whether said slave machine

is ready for communication.

40. The image formation system according to the claim 38,
wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
5 peer to peer.

41. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one
other image formation apparatus such that data communications
can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
10 apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
15 read image is transferred to said other image formation
apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
local image formation apparatus and said other image formation
apparatus,

wherein the operations in the link copy mode are inhibited
20 when the link copy mode is selected and a communication error
occurs with said other image formation apparatus.

42. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 41,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
25 other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

43. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

5 a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints an image; and
a reporting unit which reports to said other image formation apparatus of a communication error state in said local image formation apparatus,

10 wherein an image of a document read by and transferred from said other image formation apparatus is printed in said local image formation apparatus.

44. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 43,
15 wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

45. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each
20 other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master
25 machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine whether a communication error has occurred in said slave machine, and said master machine inhibits the operation in the link copy mode when the link copy mode is selected and said slave machine reports that a communication error has occurred.

46. The image formation system according to the claim 45, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

47. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

wherein the selection of the link copy mode is inhibited when the power of said other image formation apparatus is OFF.

48. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 47, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

5 49. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
10 one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports an ON/OFF state of said slave machine to said slave machine, and said master machine
15 inhibits selection of the link copy mode when the power of said slave machine is OFF.

50. The image formation system according to the claim 49, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
20 peer to peer.

51. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
25 apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints the read image; and
a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
read image is transferred to said other image formation
5 apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
local image formation apparatus and said other image formation
apparatus,

wherein the selection of the link copy mode is inhibited
when said other image formation apparatus is not in a state where
10 data communication can be executed.

52. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 51,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

53. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each
other for enabling data communications, an image formation
apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a
15 document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave
machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master
machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine
25 whether data communications can be executed from said slave

machine to said master machine, and said master machine inhibits selection of the link copy mode when said slave machine is not in a state where data communication can be executed.

5 54. The image formation system according to the claim 53, wherein said slave machine periodically transmits a communication connection confirmation signal indicating whether connection has been established to said master machine, and said master machine receives the communication connection
10 confirmation signal and determines whether said slave machine is ready for communication.

15 55. The image formation system according to the claim 53, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

20 56. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints the read image; and
a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation
25 apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the

local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

wherein the selection of the link copy mode is inhibited when a communication error occurs in said other image formation apparatus.

57. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 56, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

58. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine that a communication error has occurred in said slave machine, and said master machine inhibits selection of the link copy mode when a communication error occurs in said slave machine.

59. The image formation system according to the claim 58, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

5 60. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

10 a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
15 local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

wherein the operations in the link copy mode are inhibited when said other image formation apparatus is in the supply end state.

20 61. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 60, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

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62. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

- 5 a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
- a printing unit which prints an image;
- a reporting unit which reports to said other image formation apparatus of a supply state in said local image formation apparatus,

10 wherein an image of a document read by and transferred from said other image formation apparatus is printed in said local image formation apparatus.

63. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 62,
15 wherein said reporting unit reports the supply state in said local image formation apparatus to said other image formation apparatus when the supply state in said local image formation apparatus changes.

20 64. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 62, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

65. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine of the supply state in said slave machine, and said master machine inhibits the operation in the link copy mode when said slave machine is in the supply end state.

66. The image formation system according to the claim 65, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

67. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the

read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

5 wherein the operations in the link copy mode are inhibited when a print engine error occurs in said other image formation apparatus.

68. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 67,
10 wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

69. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications
15 can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints an image; and
a reporting unit which reports to said other image
20 formation apparatus of a print engine state in said local image formation apparatus,

wherein an image of a document read by and transferred from said other image formation apparatus is printed in said local image formation apparatus.

70. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 69, wherein said reporting unit reports the print engine state to said other image formation apparatus when the print engine state in said local image formation apparatus changes.

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71. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 69, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

10 72. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
15 one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine of print engine state in said slave machine, and said master
20 machine inhibits the link copy operation when a print engine error occurs in said slave machine.

73. The image formation system according to the claim 72, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
25 peer to peer.

74. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

5 a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;
and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
10 local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

wherein the operations in the link copy mode are inhibited when said other image formation apparatus display a screen other
15 than the normal copy screen.

75. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 74, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

20 76. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

25 a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints an image; and

a reporting unit which reports to said other image formation apparatus of a screen display state in said local image formation apparatus,

5 wherein an image of a document read by and transferred from said other image formation apparatus is printed in said local image formation apparatus.

77. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 76,
10 wherein said reporting unit reports the screen display state in said local image formation apparatus to said other image formation apparatus when the screen display state in said local image formation apparatus changes.

78. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 76,
15 wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

79. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
20 of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave
25 machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master

machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine of a screen display state in said slave machine, and said master machine inhibits the operation in the link copy mode when said
5 slave machine displays a state other than the normal copy screen.

80. The image formation system according to the claim 79, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
10 peer to peer.

81. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
15 apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
20 read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

wherein the operations in the link copy mode are inhibited
25 when said other image formation apparatus is printing an image.

82. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 81, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

5 83. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

10 a printing unit which prints an image; and

a reporting unit which reports to said other image formation apparatus of an operating state of a print engine in said local image formation apparatus,

15 wherein an image of a document read by and transferred from said other image formation apparatus is printed in said local image formation apparatus.

84. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 83, wherein said reporting unit reports the operating state of a print engine to said other image formation apparatus when the operating state of a print engine in said local image formation apparatus changes.

85. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 83, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

5 86. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
10 one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine of an operating state of a print engine in said slave machine,
15 and said master machine inhibits the operation in the link copy mode when said slave machine is printing an image.

87. The image formation system according to the claim 86, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
20 peer to peer.

88. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
25 apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints read image of a document;
and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
5 read image is transferred to said other image formation
apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
local image formation apparatus and said other image formation
apparatus,

wherein the selection of the link copy mode is inhibited
10 when said other image formation apparatus is in the supply end
state.

89. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 88,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
15 other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

90. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each
other for enabling data communications, an image formation
20 apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a
document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave
machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master
machine and said slave machine,

25 wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine

of a supply state in said slave machine, and said master machine inhibits selection of the link copy mode when said slave machine is in the supply end state.

5 91. The image formation system according to the claim 90, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

10 92. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

15 and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and said other image formation
20 apparatus,

wherein selection of the link copy mode is inhibited when a print engine error occurs in said other image formation apparatus.

93. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 92, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

5 94. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
10 one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine of a print engine state in said slave machine, and said master
15 machine inhibits selection of the link copy mode when a print engine error occurs in said slave machine.

95. The image formation system according to the claim 94, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
20 peer to peer.

96. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
25 apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;
and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
5 read image is transferred to said other image formation
apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
local image formation apparatus and said other image formation
apparatus,

wherein selection of the link copy mode is inhibited when
10 said other image formation apparatus displays a screen other
than the normal copy screen.

97. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 96,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
15 other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

98. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each
other for enabling data communications, an image formation
20 apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a
document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave
machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master
machine and said slave machine,

25 wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine

of a screen display state in said slave machine, and said master machine inhibits selection of the link copy mode when said slave machine displays a screen other than the normal copy screen.

5 99. The image formation system according to the claim 98, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

10 100. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

15 and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

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wherein selection of the link copy mode is inhibited when said other image formation apparatus is printing an image.

101. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 100,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

5 102. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each
other for enabling data communications, an image formation
apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a
document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
10 one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave
machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master
machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine reports to said master machine
of an operating in said slave machine, and said master machine
15 inhibits selection of the link copy mode when said slave machine
is printing an image.

103. The image formation system according to the claim 102,
wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
20 peer to peer.

104. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one
other image formation apparatus such that data communications
can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
25 apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
a printing unit which prints the read image; and
a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
read image is transferred to said other image formation
5 apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
local image formation apparatus and said other image formation
apparatus,

wherein the link copy mode is automatically executed when
the number of copies of the document to be printed is more than
10 a specified number.

105. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 104,
further comprises a display unit on which a message indicating
execution of the link copy mode is displayed when the link copy
15 mode is automatically executed.

106. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 104,
wherein the link copy mode is canceled when the link copy mode
is automatically executed and the printing job is finished.

107. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 104,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

108. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each
other for enabling data communications, an image formation
apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a
5 document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave
machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master
machine and said slave machine,

wherein said master machine automatically executes the
10 link copy mode when the number of copies of the document to be
printed is more than a specified number.

109. The image formation system according to the claim 108,
wherein said master machine has a display unit on which a message
15 indicating execution of the link copy mode is displayed when
the link copy mode is automatically executed.

110. The image formation system according to the claim 108,
wherein said master machine cancels the link copy mode when the
20 link copy mode is automatically executed and the printing job
is finished.

111. The image formation system according to the claim 108,
wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device
25 peer to peer.

112. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

5 a reading unit which reads an image of a document;
 a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;
and
 a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
10 local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

 wherein the link copy mode is automatically executed when a number of documents is more than a specified number of sheets.

15

113. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 112, further comprises a display unit on which a message indicating execution of the link copy mode is displayed when the link copy mode is automatically executed.

20

114. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 112, wherein the link copy mode is canceled when the link copy mode is automatically executed and the printing job is finished.

25

115. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 112,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

5 116. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each
other for enabling data communications, an image formation
apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a
document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
10 one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave
machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master
machine and said slave machine,

wherein said master machine automatically executed the
link copy mode when the number of sheets of the document is more
15 than a specified.

117. The image formation system according to the claim 116,
wherein said master machine has a display unit on which a message
indicating execution of the link copy mode is displayed when
20 the link copy mode is automatically executed.

118. The image formation system according to the claim 116,
wherein said master machine cancels the link copy mode when the
link copy mode is automatically executed and the printing job
25 is finished.

119. The image formation system according to the claim 116, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

5 120. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

10 a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
15 local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

wherein a total number of required copies is calculated based on the number of sheets of the document and the specified number of copies, and the link copy mode is automatically
20 executed when the calculated total number of copies exceeds a prespecified number.

121. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 120, further comprises a display unit on which a message indicating
25 execution of the link copy mode is displayed when the link copy

mode is automatically executed.

122. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 120,
wherein the link copy mode is canceled when the link copy mode
5 is automatically executed and the printing job is finished.

123. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each
other for enabling data communications, an image formation
10 apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a
document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least
one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave
machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master
machine and said slave machine.

15 wherein said master machine calculates a total number of
copies to be printed based on the number of sheets of the document
and the specified number of copies, and automatically executes
the link copy mode when the calculated total number of copies
exceeds a prespecified number.

20 124. The image formation system according to the claim 123,
wherein said master machine has a display unit on which a message
indicating execution of the link copy mode is displayed when
the link copy mode is automatically executed.

125. The image formation system according to the claim 123, wherein said master machine cancels the link copy mode when the link copy mode is automatically executed and the printing job is finished.

5

126. The image formation system according to the claim 123, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

10

127. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

15

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;

and

20

a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the read image is transferred to said other image formation apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the local image formation apparatus and said other image formation apparatus,

25

wherein a total number of images to be prepared is calculated based on the number of sheets of the document, the specified number of copies, and the specified image formation mode, and the link copy mode is automatically executed when the

calculated total number of copies exceeds a prespecified number.

128. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 127,
5 further comprises a display unit on which a message indicating execution of the link copy mode is displayed when the link copy mode is automatically executed.

129. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 127,
10 wherein the link copy mode is canceled when the link copy mode is automatically executed and the printing job is finished.

130. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 127,
15 wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

131. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which,
of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation
20 apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

25 wherein said master machine calculates a total number of

images to be prepared based on the number of sheets of the document, the specified number of copies, and the specified image formation mode, and automatically executes the link copy mode when the calculated total number of copies exceeds a prespecified number.

132. The image formation system according to the claim 131, wherein said master machine has a display unit on which a message indicating execution of the link copy mode is displayed when the link copy mode is automatically executed.

133. The image formation system according to the claim 131, wherein said master machine cancels the link copy mode when the link copy mode is automatically executed and the printing job is finished.

134. The image formation system according to the claim 131, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.

135. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one other image formation apparatus such that data communications can be executed between the two image formation apparatus apparatuses, said image formation apparatus comprising:

a reading unit which reads an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints the read image of a document;
a controller which executes a link copy mode in which the
read image is transferred to said other image formation
apparatus for sharing the printing of the read image with the
5 local image formation apparatus and said other image formation
apparatus,

a link copy mode shift request reporting unit which sends
a request for shifting to the link copy mode to said other image
formation apparatus when the link copy mode is selected; and

10 a link copy mode setting unit which sets the link copy
mode based on the result of determination as to whether shifting
to the link copy mode is possible or not received in response
to the request for shift to the link copy mode.

15 136. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 135,
wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said
other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

137. An image formation apparatus connected to at least one
20 other image formation apparatus such that data communications
can be executed between the two image formation apparatus
apparatuses and prints an image of a document read by and
transferred from said other image formation apparatus, said
image formation apparatus comprising:

25 a reading unit which reads a an image of a document;

a printing unit which prints an image; and

a link copy mode shift determination unit which determines in response to a request for shift to the link copy mode transmitted from said other image formation apparatus whether shift to the link copy mode is possible, and sends the result of determination to said other image formation apparatus.

138. The image formation apparatus according to the claim 137, wherein said image formation apparatus is connected to said other image formation apparatus peer to peer.

139. An image formation system having a link copy mode in which, of a plurality of image formation apparatuses connected to each other for enabling data communications, an image formation apparatus functioning as a master machine reads an image of a document to be copied, the read image is transferred to at least one other image formation apparatus functioning as a slave machine, and printing of the read image is shared by said master machine and said slave machine,

wherein said slave machine has a link copy mode shift determination unit which determines in response to a request for shift to the link copy mode transmitted from said master machine whether shift to the link copy mode is possible and sends the result of determination to said master machine, and

said master machine has a link copy mode shift request reporting unit which sends a request for shift to the link copy mode to said slave machine when the link copy mode is selected, and a link copy mode setting unit which sets the link copy mode according to the result of determination transmitted from said other image formation apparatus.

140. The image formation system according to the claim 139, wherein said master machine is connected to the slave device peer to peer.